25X1 CEE/N/TRALNIN/T/ELLIGEN/C/E/AGENCY Memorandum THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM Information as of 1600 5 November 1965 PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS NOT AUTHORIZED 25X1



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HIGHLIGHTS

US air strikes in North Vietnam have damaged a bridge on the rail and highway link between Hanoi and the port of Haiphong. Another strike in the Haiphong area destroyed a van and possibly a missile and launcher at a SAM site. There are indications that the rail line between Hanoi and Lao Cai may have been restored to limited service. Communist truck traffic has been observed on Route 23 in the Laos panhandle for the first time since the start of the rainy season last June.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: MACV has provided additional details concerning Operation LONG REACH, the clearing action initiated by the 1st Brigade/US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) on 23 October near the embattled Plei Me Special Forces camp in Pleiku Province; cumulative Viet Cong losses in this phase of the Plei Me engagement stand at 342 killed (158 confirmed by body count) and 101 captured, as against 143 American casualties (Paras. 1-2). An estimated Viet Cong company yesterday attacked and overran a companystrength ARVN Ranger outpost near Ben Tre, the capital of Kien Hoa Province, inflicting heavy casualties on the garrison's defenders (Para. 3). ditional Communist attacks were reported early today against government positions in the northernmost provinces of Quang Tri and Thua Thien (Para. 4). Nine American military personnel were killed yesterday when two UH-1D helicopters of the US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) crashed and burned following a mid-air collision near An Khe (Para. 6). Sergeant Jasper Page, one of four USAF enlisted personnel captured by the Viet Cong near Vung Tau on 31 October 1965, escaped from his captors on 2 November, and has since returned to US control (Para.7). II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky, in a regular meeting with the press to-day, reportedly denied that he had any plans for an early visit to the US or for an imminent reshuffle of his cabinet (Para. 1).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: US aircraft struck an important bridge on the rail and highway link between Hanoi and the port of Haiphong for the first time on 5 November. Some damage was inflicted but both spans of the structure remained standing. One aircraft was lost to ground fire during the attack (Para. 1). A strike on a SAM site in the Haiphong area inflicted moderate damage, including destruction of one van and possible destruction of one missile and launcher (Para. 2). One USAF F-105 Thunderchief and one reconnaissance drone vehicle were downed by missiles north of Thanh Hoa (Paras. 3-4). The Bai Thuong airfield, northwest of Than Hoa, was damaged by a US air strike on 5 November (Para. 5).

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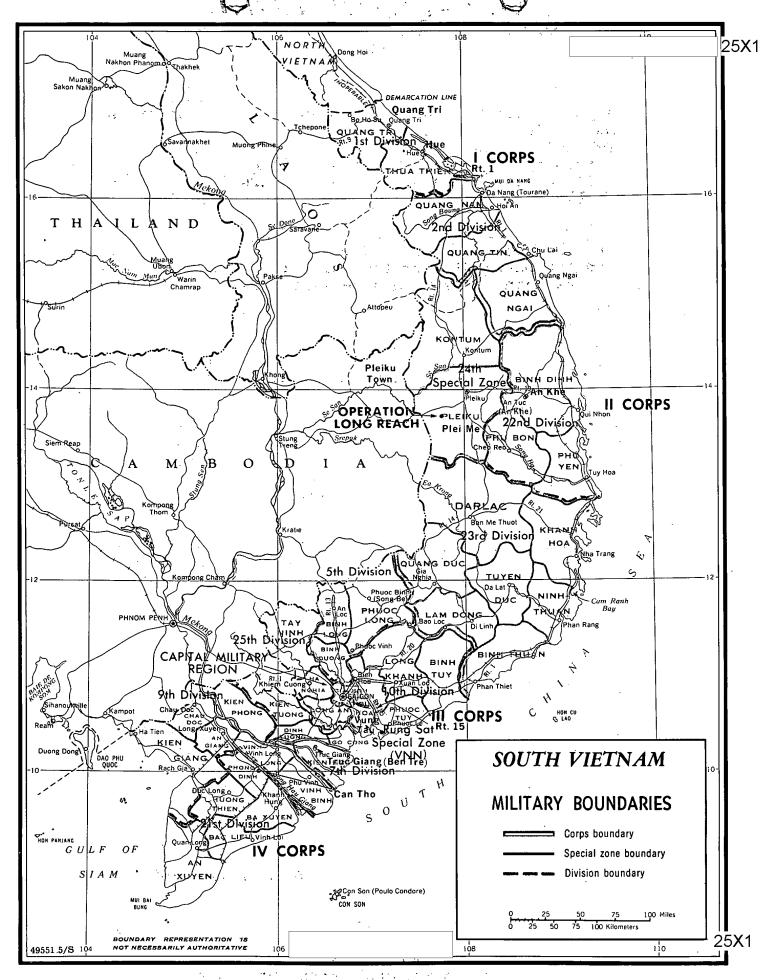
- IV. Other Communist Military Developments: Nothing of significance to report.
- V. Communist Political Developments: The Hungarian Communist Party delegation that visited the Far East last month to push Moscow's position in the Sino-Soviet dispute received a more cordial reception in Hanoi than in Pyongyang according to the Hungarian deputy premier (Paras. 1-2). The North Vietnamese have issued an official statement condemning the US build-up in South Vietnam but it

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appears routine and contains no hint of a shift in DRV policy toward the war in the South (Paras. 3-4). Peking's propaganda hails recent Viet Cong "victories" in South Vietnam but the People's Daily editorial on 5 November appears generally defensive (Para. 5).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Communist truck traffic has been observed on Route 23 in the Laotian panhandle for the first time since the start of the rainy season in June (Para. 1).



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. MACV has provided additional details concerning Operation LONG REACH, the clearing operation initiated by the 1st Brigade/US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) on 23 October near the embattled Plei Me Special Forces camp in Pleiku Province. Platoon-strength elements of the 1st Battalion/9th Cavalry killed an estimated 93 Viet Cong in two ambushes during the night of 3-4 November, while taking friendly casualties of four killed and 27 wounded.

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In a day-long engagement on 4 November with a Viet Cong company 12 miles west of Pleiku town, elements of the 2nd Battalion/8th Cavalry killed an estimated 98 guerrillas (13 confirmed by body count) and captured 21 weapons. American losses totaled 11 killed and 19 wounded. In addition, the bodies of 36 Viet Cong, believed killed in the initial 20 October enemy assault on Plei Me, were discovered by units of the 2nd Battalion/8th Cavalry.

- 2. Operation LONG REACH has thus far resulted in cumulative Viet Cong losses of 342 killed (158 confirmed by body count), 101 captured, and 63 weapons seized. Twenty-seven members of the 1st Brigade/US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) have been killed and 116 wounded to date.
- 3. An estimated Viet Cong company yester-day attacked and overran an outpost manned by an ARVN Ranger company near Ben Tre (Truc Giang), the capital of Kien Hoa Province, 45 miles southwest of Saigon. Sixteen government defenders were killed, 30 wounded, nine MIA/captured, and 33 weapons seized; enemy losses were unknown. An ARVN reaction force has been dispatched to the area.

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- 4. Additional Viet Cong attacks were reported early today against government troops guarding a bridge along National Route 1, 18 miles southeast of Hué, the capital of Thua Thien Province, and against an ARVN field position five miles south of Quang Tri. Friendly casualties in both engagements were described as "light."
- 5. On 3 November, in Vinh Long Province, 12 miles east-northeast of Can Tho, two platoons of Regional and Popular Forces soldiers engaged an estimated Viet Cong platoon, killing 15 guerrillas and capturing six weapons.
- 6. Two UH-1D helicopters of the US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) crashed and burned following a mid-air collision yesterday two miles west of An Khe, in central coastal Binh Dinh Province. All nine Americans aboard the two aircraft were killed. The helicopters were reportedly returning to the division's base camp at An Khe from a close air support mission in the embattled Plei Me area, 50 miles to the southwest, when the incident occurred.
- 7. Staff Sergeant Jasper Page, one of four USAF enlisted personnel captured by the Viet Cong near Vung Tau on 31 October 1965, escaped from his captors on 2 November, and has since returned to US control. The quartet was captured while en route by automobile from Vung Tau to Saigon along National Route 15. Page reportedly escaped during the course of a forced march to a Viet Cong prison camp "somewhere to the north."

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I	. POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM	

l. Premier Ky, in one of his regular weekly breakfasts with the press, stated today that he planned no early visit to the US, but might send a "citizens' committee" to help counteract the demonstrations of US students against involvement in Vietnam. Ky denied rumors that he planned an imminent reshuffle of his cabinet, but said changes might be necessary in the future to cope with "new developments." He also disclosed that a joint committee had been set up to study the problem of certain goods and items which are in short supply or have undergone price rises because of the US buildup.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

- 1. US aircraft struck the Hai Duong rail and highway bridge between Hanoi and Haiphong for the first time on 5 November. Pilots report light damage to the deck of the eastern span but both spans were still standing. Smoke precluded further damage assessments. One US aircraft was lost to enemy ground fire during the attack. The pilot bailed out but no rescue operations were attempted because he landed in a densely populated and heavily defended area.
- 2. Moderate damage was inflicted on a SAM site in the Haiphong area (probably site 21) by supporting fighters. Pilots reported good hits in the revetment areas with 500- and 1,000-pound bombs. At least one secondary explosion was noted and one van was destroyed. One missile and its launcher are also believed to have been destroyed.
- 3. In other air action one USAF F-105 Thunder-chief was downed by a SAM north of Thanh Hoa. Three missiles were launched at a flight of four aircraft and one of these exploded approximately 50 feet behind the flight leader who went down. No chute was observed and the plane was last seen going down through the clouds.
- 4. A US reconnaissance drone was also downed by a SAM in the same general area.

To date

- 5 drones and seven US aircraft have been lost to SAMs over North Vietnam.
- 5. Bai Thuong airfield northwest of Thanh Hoa was attacked by US aircraft on 5 November and the runway was reportedly cratered in twenty places. This airfield has been under construction for the last few months. This was the second strike against this target.

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IV. OTHER MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

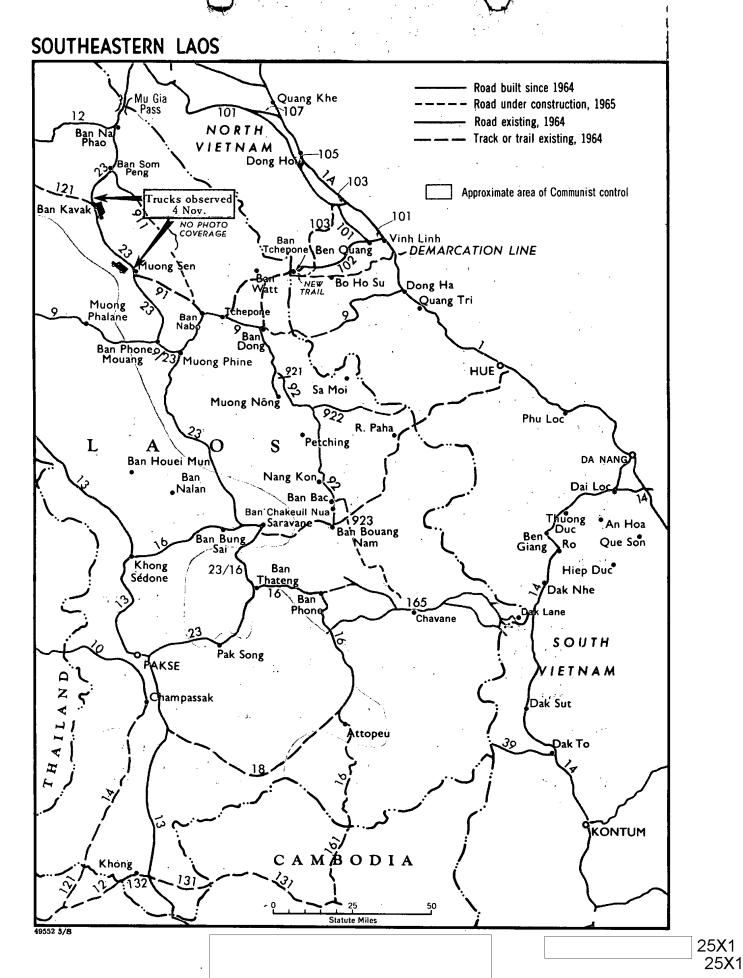
1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. OTHER COMMUNIST DEVELOPMENTS

- l. Hungarian Deputy Premier Jano Fock in a television interview on 4 November confirmed earlier indications that one of the main purposes of the visit by a Hungarian Communist Party delegation to the Far East in October was to present its pro-Soviet views on the Sino-Soviet dispute to Hanoi and Pyongyang. Fock made some unusually frank comments on North Vietnamese and North Korean attitudes toward the dispute and indicated that he had a much better reception in Hanoi than he did in Pyongyang.
- 2. He described the Vietnamese reception as "exceptionally cordial" whereas his talks with North Korean leaders only "gradually became more cordial" as the visit progressed. He failed, however, to identify any specific issues in the dispute on which there were significant differences between North Vietnamese and North Korean views. Fock indicated that the Hungarians would increase their political support for Vietnam, but was noncommittal about the prospects for any increase in economic or defense assistance to the DRV.
- 3. Hanoi issued an official Foreign Ministry statement today condemning the buildup of US combat forces in South Vietnam, and the "feverish" American intensification of the fighting there. This is the first official DRV statement on the US buildup in over three months. The statement is routine in the wording of its charges, however, and contains no hint of a shift in DRV policy toward the war in the South. Hanoi's terms for an end to the fighting are routinely restated, and the question of timing was not raised in the discussion of the requirement for a withdrawal of US forces.



- 4. The statement may represent an effort to mark time on the part of the DRV. There have been unconfirmed rumors that top-level DRV leaders were visiting in Moscow and Peking during the past month, and the pattern of appearances by the North Vietnamese politburo has suggested that high-level meetings may have been under way in the DRV sometime during the same period. It is probable that decisions on future strategy in the war would have been taken at any such meetings and as a result of conversations with Moscow and Peking. Until these decisions were implemented, it is likely that the DRV public position would be kept on dead center.
- 5. After a period of relative silence regarding specific "victories" by which the Viet Cong were allegedly winning the Vietnam war, the People's Daily editorial on 5 November asserted that the "magnificent" Viet Cong successes at Plei Me, Chu Lai, and Da Nang in late October had proved the validity of the rules of "people's war" and "shattered" US claims that the situation in Vietnam had been stabilized. The editorial concluded with a new formulation of the Chinese promise to back the DRV, implying that Peking would not provoke a war with the US, but would respond to a US attack. The editorial asserted that if "US imperialism is willing to offer itself, the people of Vietnam and the nations and peoples who support them will strike and strike hard."

Comment: The over-all thrust of this editorial appears defensive and it may reflect Chinese concern over the mounting effects of the US buildup in South Vietnam.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

1. Communist truck traffic has been observed on Route 23 in the Laotian panhandle for the first time since the onset of the rainy season in June. One truck was spotted moving south on 4 November by a roadwatch team located on the northern section of Route 23. Farther south on the same day, 13 trucks moved past a team located some 30 miles north of Ban Phone Mouang. Last year, Route 23 did not open up to truck traffic until late December.

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